Determination

Standards for Rangeland Health and Conformance with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management

Field Office: Jarbidge Field Office	**Watershed Name:** Bruneau River

Allotment Name/Number: 71 Desert / 1099

Public Land (acres)			**Streams on Public Land (miles)**: 0
Upland: 39,697	**Riparian:** 0	**Total:** 39,697	

Date(s) of Field Assessment: 2002	**Name of Permittee(s):** Simplot Livestock Co.

Assessment Participants (Name & Discipline or Interest):
Arnie Pike, Rangeland Management Specialist
James Klott, Wildlife Biologist
Clare Josaitis, Natural Resource Specialist
John Ash, Natural Resource Specialist
Sheri Hagwood, Botanist
Patricia Courtney, Range Technician

Standard 1 (Watersheds)
Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	X Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
☐ Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress to meeting the Standard.	☐ Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are **not** Significant Factors.
☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	X Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s). 3

Rationale/Information Sources:

Bare ground is higher than expected for the range site which is less than 10 percent in five of the nine sites. Wind scouring and deposits are evident in some of the burned areas. This wind

scouring and deposition occurred after wildfire prior to plant growth the next growing season. There is some soil loss on some sites, but it is not recent. The soil surface resistance to erosion is good at 7 of the 9 sites.

Livestock management practices need to provide litter on the ground for cover to reduce bare ground.

Standard 2 (Riparian Areas and Wetlands)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	X Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
☐ Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress to meeting the Standard.	☐ Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are **not** Significant Factors.
☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	X Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s). 5

Rationale/Information Sources:

Clover Creek segment 12.3 to 15.7 runs between the 71 Desert and Winter Camp Allotments (#01064) Allotments. Livestock use in this part of Clover Creek is primarily from the 71 Desert side, and provides the sole source of water in the northern-most pasture of this allotment. The stream segment is rated as functioning at risk in an upward trend because when rated it had not been grazed for a couple of years. This non-grazing was not a management change but rather initiated by the permittee.

During the last few years, Clover Creek in this area of the 71 Desert has dried up in July and usually begins to flow again in mid to late September. The cessation of flows is due to center pivot irrigation use in the Three Creek area. This may slow changes made by changes to livestock management.

Standard 3 (Stream Channel/Floodplain)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	X Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
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☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	X Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s).

Rationale/Information Sources:

Streambank are not well vegetated making it susceptible to erosion. Some banks are bare and raw and sloughing into the creek. Willows are present in some areas to strengthen the streambank. Since this is the only water in the Lookout Pasture, livestock can congregate resulting in trampling of banks.

Standard 4 (Native Plant Communities)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	☐ Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
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☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	☐ Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s).

Rationale/Information Sources:

In the West Pasture, forbs, nitrogen fixing legumes and native perennial grasses are in low composition in the plant communities. There is a compaction layer present in this Pasture, but it is are weak and not restricting root penetration.

Current grazing management is mostly in the dormant season for plants and the permittee generally does not graze the same pasture in two consecutive critical growing seasons. So the absence of Thurber's needlegrass is expected to be caused by repeated historic wildfire.

Standard 5 (Seedings)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	X Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
☐ Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress to meeting the Standard.	☐ Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are **not** Significant Factors.
☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	X Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s). 3, 8

Rationale/Information Sources:

Data was collected at three areas that were seeded to crested wheatgrass following wild fire. The four-wing saltbush seeded as part of a fire rehabilitation to augment the wildlife habitat that burned, shows hedging and 25% mortality on older plants due to browsing by cattle at one site. Livestock use has resulted in a shift in the ratio of male to female plants, with the vast majority of the plants being male. Exotic annual grasses (cheatgrass) and forbs (bur buttercup, Russian thistle, and tumble mustard) are scattered through out the plant community and dominate areas disturbed by rodents. Bottlebrush squirreltail, Thurber's needlegrass, and other tall native grasses are generally lacking from the seedings similar to the situation at some of the native vegetation areas.

Standard 6 (Exotic Plant Communities, Other than Seedings)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

X Standard doesn't apply	
☐ Meeting the Standard.	☐ Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are Significant Factors.
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☐ Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	☐ Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s).

Rationale/Information Sources:

Standard 7 (Water Quality)

Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

☐ Standard doesn't apply	
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X Conforms with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management.	☐ Does not conform with Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management Guideline No(s).

Rationale/Information Sources:

The only permanent surface water associated with this allotment is the East Fork of the Bruneau River (also known as Clover Creek), which basically forms a four mile boundary along the northern perimeter of the allotment. Historically, cattle have had access to this water source along this stretch for the majority their drinking needs in the allotment, as well as from several other adjacent allotments. Although this source is still used for this purpose today, its demand has become less in the past several years with the development of upland watering systems of pipelines and troughs. The implementation of these systems has lured away some of the direct watering demands and impacts of cattle use at the creek source, which in return should have improved the water quality. However, total removal of livestock use has not been fully

recognized yet, but it has become more controlled and confined with the installation of water gap fencing. Cattle can only drink from the creek at designated water gaps and do not have complete access to the entire river bottom along this segment anymore. This too has greatly reduced livestock impacts along the river banks and to the water quality of the river.

As for the water quality of the East Fork of the Bruneau River, the BLM has been monitoring several water quality attributes since 1992 at several locations in the upper reaches of this river, above Clover Crossing. In brief summary, the main attribute not meeting State Standards for a cold water biota is temperature. Daily average or maximum temperature standards (not to exceed 19° C or 22° C, respectively) have been routinely exceeded for the past several years mainly during the months of July and August. However, it is realized that these high temperatures are likely attributed to the narrow, black lava rock canyon setting and the very low flows of the river during the summer months, which can be traced to irrigation use in the head waters of the creek. Also, on occasions, the dissolved oxygen and fecal coliform standards have been observed to exceed State Standards. The BLM has not monitored for sediments or any biological parameters.

Regulated by the State's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the East Fork of the Bruneau River, from it headwaters to the Bruneau River, has been identified and nominated for the State's 1996 and '98 303(d) list for not meeting water quality standards for **sediments** and **temperatures,** however the severity of these pollutants were rated low. Currently, DEQ is in the review and planning stages of the Bruneau River Basin Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan (draft 2002), which includes the review of the beneficial uses of the East Fork of the Bruneau River, along with several other creeks and water bodies in the basin. When the plan becomes final, recommendations for best management practices will be applied to this river (in cooperation with the BLM and private land owners) that will improve and enhance these current "water quality limited" issues and/or concerns.

Other probable surface waters within the allotment include several natural playas. Although these playas are ephemeral in nature, they do on occasions impound and retain water for livestock use during high rain fall events or after spring snow melt. The BLM does not monitor these waters nor does the DEQ have any concerns with them either mainly because of their nature. No water is ever release by these playas. It either sinks or evaporates, if not first used by livestock or wildlife.

As previously mentioned, much of the water use for livestock and wildlife comes from a pipeline and troughs water distribution system in the central and southern pastures in the allotment. The source for this main pipeline system comes from ground water (AEC well) on public land. The quality of this water was not monitored by the BLM, but is presumed to be of good quality for livestock and wildlife consumption since it comes directly from a protected and enclosed ground water source.

Standard 8 (Threatened and Endangered Plants and Animals)
Check those that apply:[*One or more boxes must be checked.*]

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☐ Not Meeting the Standard, but making significant progress to meeting the Standard.	X Not Meeting the Standard, Livestock Grazing Management Practices are **not** Significant Factors.
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Rationale/Information Sources:

A number of species presently designated as Sensitive species are present in the allotment. For the most part, the allotment has not been inventoried for sensitive species. Sensitive species occurrences are frequently from incidental observations. Sagebrush composition provides adequate habitat for sensitive animal species. The most concern with the sensitive animal species is the lack of plant diversity as shown by the limited forb and dominant perennial native grasses.

Two plants presently classified as sensitive species are known to be in the allotment. It is unknown whether the standard is being met for special status plant species. There is no information available to determine whether livestock grazing management is having a significant impact on sensitive plant species or not.

Determination

I have determined that all of the applicable Standards for Rangeland Health (Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8) are not being met in the allotment, and progress is not being made toward achieving them. Current livestock grazing practices are a factor in not meeting Standards 1, 2, 3, and 5; and do not conform to some of the Guidelines for Livestock Grazing Management. Current livestock grazing is found not to be a factor for Standard 4, 7 and 8;

/s/ E. Guerrero — 5/12/04
Field Manager — Date